

MARTOR



Title: "Kayaktivism: The Anthropology of Protest, Craft, and the Imagination"

Author: William Westerman

How to cite this article: Westerman, William. 2017. "Kayaktivism: The Anthropology of Protest, Craft, and the Imagination." *Martor* 22: 109-126.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-22-2017/>

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor Journal* is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.



Kayaktivism: The Anthropology of Protest, Craft, and the Imagination

William Westerman

Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
New Jersey City University, Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S.A.
westerman22@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article concerns the re-fashioning of traditional small, hand-powered boat craft – namely canoes and kayaks – into instruments of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. This has recently been termed “kayaktivism” by participants in these actions. The protests can take the form of civilian blockades or sites for making statements of opposition, whether in visual or verbal form, or both. The most common targets originally were weapons shipments, but since the turn of the millennium such protests focus on fossil fuels and nuclear power vs. sustainability as an ethic. Five examples of this are briefly sketched: 1) canoe blockades of Pakistani weapons shipments leaving the northeastern U.S. during the Bangladeshi Liberation War of 1971, 2) the Bay Area Peace Navy in San Francisco that protested militarism, nuclear power, and weapons shipments to Central America, 3) the South Pacific Climate Warriors canoe action in Newcastle, Australia to blockade and protest coal shipments, 4) actions in the northwestern U.S. to block a Shell Oil vessel from drilling in the Arctic Ocean, and 5) river protests in New Jersey, U.S.A., against a new power plant and a natural gas pipeline under the Delaware River. The conclusion of the paper considers this in the context of other civil disobedience, and why the image of the canoe or kayak is so effective, including the centrality of the David and Goliath motif. Finally it looks at how protesters use, adapt, and build upon canoe traditions and the relationship between traditional craft and value systems.

KEYWORDS

Creative forms of protest, nonviolent civil disobedience, social activism, kayaktivism, tradition, craft, the David-and-Goliath motif.

Protest includes both the potential for blocking (short term) or preventing (long term) unwanted, usually dominating behaviors, and the expression of discontent, sometimes in creative ways. Social protest can involve shared or community beliefs, and can also involve an educational function, to inform and win over new allies.

New threats to our survival or livelihood, which is to say not just new regimes but threats that put our lives at risk, can require new forms of protest. After all, if old protests have not been successful there needs to be an adaptation of tactics, and likewise if they have been successful, those in power will have altered their response accordingly or lose their power, so the same tactics are less likely to work again. A new regime may face

an age-old tactic like street demonstrations. But a new behavior or a new policy – or a new understanding that these or previous practices are detrimental to well-being – requires a response suited to the task.

This includes social protest that is not just symbolic and aesthetic, but also that which involves direct action to block or prevent oppressive, unjust practice. When that involves active nonviolence, especially in violating laws that are seen as unjust or legal but immoral behaviors sanctioned by such laws, this builds on the tradition of civil disobedience, first articulated by the 19th century naturalist and antiwar activist and writer Henry David Thoreau. This paper concerns such protests that have been grouped under the neologism, *kayaktivism*, which I define as protests that

involve small manually powered water craft for the blocking of action or blockading of transported goods by large sea vessels, and aquatic protests that use such small craft as sites for visual or verbal statements of opposition to policy or the assertion of power. I use this term for convenience to describe such practice whenever such protests include hand-powered, and often handmade, boats, including canoes and other rowboats, and not just kayaks *per se*.

This article began as a way to investigate a seeming paradox in the study of folk protest, the connection of two ideas that can also seem to be in conflict, namely whether and in what ways traditional culture can be a progressive force. Of course tradition can be used in multiple ways, and as is well established not only is it continually re-invented, but it can be invented (Hobsbawm 1992), and may not necessarily literally reflect the way things once were. But a deeper question lies in what ways traditional culture can be drawn on in reserve for progressive, life-sustaining purposes. Though we are led to believe that tradition is by definition rooted in the past and backward-looking, there can be a progressive dimension of tradition, particularly when traditions can be drawn upon to reinforce connections to the ecosystem that are sustainable. After all, it is the twin forces of colonialism and the Industrial Revolution that began our unsustainable exploitation of not just labor, but resources, and an economic system devoted to profit and efficiency rather than the flourishing of all life. For indigenous and native peoples, the idea that respecting nature and life is in accord with lifestyles that are traditional and sustainable is not contradictory. But for most Western people with a linear view of history, economics, and culture and a detachment from living sustainably or even cyclically with the Earth, there is an apparent contradiction between progress and tradition. This needs to be examined further.

For the purposes of this article, I include only protest against states or corporations. I

do not include acts of piracy, seizing goods or personnel; breaking through blockades for the purpose of delivering humanitarian aid; or any acts that involve actions by larger, heavier-powered ships against smaller or equal-sized crafts – preventing rafts of refugees from safely reaching shore, for example. This is not to say that there is not a continuum of protest actions; Greenpeace’s work disrupting whaling, overfishing, or oil drilling with large ships such as their *Rainbow Warrior*, *Arctic Sunrise*, or *Esperanza* is certainly environmental activism, but of a different scale as that of kayaktivism. While the David-vs.-Goliath motif (Moyer 2015; Yousuf 2016) is a quality shared by, indeed exploited by, the underdogs, I would regard these other actions as a separate phenomenon.

The term “kayaktivism” itself is derived from the realm of folk speech and word play. In English and in some other languages, such as French, there is what is known as a “*portmanteau*” word. A *portmanteau* is a combination of two words into a single, blended or combined word, that takes on the meaning or aspects of both of the original terms. This is not only an example of linguistic wordplay, but it symbolizes something new emerging out of two older concepts – using old materials to develop something innovative. It is in itself an adaptation of linguistic traditions. In this particular case, the first word, “kayak” comes from the Inuit term, *qayaq*,¹ referring to a boat that is paddled in a forward direction by a two-bladed paddle. The word “kayak” first appeared in English, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, in 1757, although it was quoted as a Greenlandic term nearly a hundred years earlier, in 1662. In comparison, the word “canoe,” which also comes to English from native American languages, via Spanish and Dutch, appeared a century earlier, in 1555, and was used by Walter Raleigh in 1618, after which point it was more continuously part of the English language. Both of these forms of boats were unknown in Europe,

1. There is no equivalent, written or oral, in English to the original unvoiced uvular stop in native languages of the Arctic, represented by the International Phonetic Alphabet as /q/, so the letter 'k' is the next best thing.

according to John McPhee (1975), so they did not enter European languages until the colonial encounter in the Americas and hence remain words derived etymologically from Native American roots.

The second word, “activism,” comes from Latin and the Greek and is, perhaps unexpectedly, a much newer coinage. The words “activism” and “activist” were not used to refer to a social reformer or someone involved in direct action until 1920, even though other meanings for the word existed a few years earlier, and even though the root of the word, “active,” had been part of English for nearly six hundred years. This means that the concept of social activism, at least in the English language, is just under one hundred years old.

What is interesting also about the word is that it is one of at least four other *portmanteaux*, coined around the same time, that combine “activism” with another word that includes the sound /-æk/, and all four are products of their times. The most used and recognized of these is “hacktivism,” first seen in 1995 (Townsend 2017)² – the practice of computer hacking for the purpose of advancing a social agenda and creating a positive social outcome, and neither mischief nor profit at the expense of others. The others – “slacktivism,” “fracktivism,” “craftivism,” “clicktivism,” and even “artivism” – have not caught on to the same extent as “kayaktivism” and “hacktivism” in English usage, perhaps because their coinage is not so logical or their meanings intuitive.

In truth, though, the first printed uses of the term “kayaktivism” actually had to do with activism on behalf of the rights of kayakers, literally. Though Townsend puts the origin of the term at 2015, a discussion board from 2011 (stripersonline.com), and a *New Yorker* article from 2013 (Paumgarten 2013), both used the term but in the course of describing protests to protect the rights of kayakers – not insignificant, yet the term has taken on a much broader meaning in the last five years. The first use of the term as

a tactic for direct action came on the radio and television news program *Democracy Now!* in 2011, and the incident they described had to do with the flotilla bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza in defiance of the Israeli blockade. That flotilla was blocked by the Greek Coast Guard, and so kayaktivists deployed into the Aegean to prevent the Coast Guard ships from blocking the flotilla. In this multilayered action then, the Israeli government had imposed a blockade against Gaza, the flotilla was trying to break that blockade, the Greek Coast Guard was trying to block the flotilla from getting to Gaza, and the kayaktivists were attempting to block the Greek Coast Guard from reaching the flotilla, or block the blockers in other words. This is significant because according to the working definition that I have adopted, kayaktivism is always about blocking, never about penetration. That blocking can also be metaphorical, through a primarily visual protest that seeks to block construction of a power plant, a pipeline, oil drilling etc.

The organization Greenpeace appears to have begun using the word on its websites as well, sometime between 2012 and 2014, so we know there was at least some in-group usage of the term in the years between prior to 2015. But it was really in 2015 that the term came to light in American parlance, as the term was first used in *The New York Times* during the May actions in Seattle (Johnson 2015), and most widely perhaps when used by Nobel Laureate Al Gore in an interview on the national cable news network MSNBC when Shell decided not to pursue drilling in the Arctic. “First of all,” Gore said, “I would like to express my thanks and give due honor to all of those activists and kayaktivists, as they call themselves, that helped to build resistance to drilling in the Arctic” (Hayes 2015). The beauty of this particular *portmanteau* is that it needs no explanation, as both words are fully stated in the combination. Yet as of this date, “kayaktivism” has not been officially added to the Oxford English Dictionary (while “hacktivism” and “slacktivism” have).³

2. Although the OED puts the date at 1998.

*

I will briefly discuss five examples of kayaktivism of significance. While no doubt there have been others which research has yet to uncover, incidents for example that were performed under the radar of press coverage (although with search engines like Google is it becoming less likely that no traces of a protest show up if it is at all newsworthy), I focus on these because two are historically significant, two are part of larger movements, and the fifth is thus far purely visual as opposed to obstructionist.

1. *The Philadelphia blockade of weapons to Pakistan (Baltimore and Philadelphia, U.S.A., 1970)*

The first documented example of kayaktivism I have found so far⁴ took place in Baltimore and Philadelphia in 1970 during what is now known as the Bangladeshi Liberation War in which that new nation, at the time known as East Pakistan, fought for secession and independence from then-West Pakistan. Local American canoe activists from the Philadelphia area attempted to prevent shipment of weapons from the U.S. to Pakistan, as authorized by President Nixon and Henry Kissinger. This action is described in detail in the book *Blockade* by Richard K. Taylor (1977) and the documentary motion picture of the same name directed by Arif Yousuf (2016). The original idea, as Taylor relates in the book and motion picture, was put forth by Quaker social worker and activist Bill Moyer (1933-2002)⁵, and was picked up by other non-violent peace activists from the greater Philadelphia community. This canoe activism was intended an act of nonviolent civil disobedience to prevent even greater violence against millions of innocent civilians. Phyllis Taylor, in the motion picture (2016), says this was an attempt both “to speak truth to power,” and “to create the visual” imagery in order to make an impression. The protestors were aware of the power of the David-and-Goliath

imbalance, or as described by Sultana Alam, who participated in generating support for the action but who was not herself one of the boaters, each canoe was akin to “a little moth trying to live against all odds.”

The risks to the protestors involved certainly included arrest and the police were on site, although few arrests were actually made, according to Taylor. But a bigger risk was to the protestors’ life and safety, since the wake of the much larger ships could force the canoes to capsize or, worse, be sucked down into the current and into the propeller. Or, of course, larger ships cannot stop quickly if a small craft crosses their path.

Part of the challenge, which is an ongoing concern for kayaktivists, is that the arrivals, lanes, specific whereabouts, and even occasionally the identities, of the ships involved can be closely guarded secrets or even, in the case of commercial ships, proprietary information. The Philadelphia activists read *The Journal of Commerce*, which had the shipping news, and they could try to deduce which ships were coming and when, but this involved a lot of detective work which could not always accurately predict where they needed to be, or more importantly, which ship might be carrying munitions. The first ship arrived actually in Baltimore Harbor, so the group termed themselves the Francis Scott Key Armada (Yousuf 2016).

The question also arises how effective such blockades are, since millions of civilians were killed during that war and millions more became refugees in India – some of whom never returned to the newly liberated Bangladesh. The protestors did raise awareness of the issue, and that awareness led to stricter congressional oversight and eventually banning all weapons going to Pakistan during that time. In the digital age, one protest can be covered by local and national media, the protestors can also broadcast their own channels of publicity far beyond press releases, and through social media such protests can

3. Nor can I speak to its existence in other languages, especially Romance languages in which its translation would be literal and predictable since the -ism morpheme has direct correspondents in those languages.

4. Nor can I speak to its There must be others, but even the idea as related in the book and the motion picture does not give any historical precedent. All that I have located prior to this involved larger ships, including yachts and sailboats. At a screening of the motion picture in Philadelphia in 2017, I asked Richard and Phyllis Taylor if they knew of any historical precedents, and to this day they do not either.

5. Not to be confused with the more prominent American journalist Bill Moyers (born 1934).

go viral. The fact that their protests could attract the attention of the U.S. Congress, during the height of the Vietnam War and bombing of Cambodia and the much larger antiwar movement, speaks to the potency of the visual imagery.

A similar canoe action, protesting the War in Southeast Asia, took place off the coast of Leonardo, New Jersey, with twenty-two canoes attempting to block weapons shipments to Vietnam from the Earle Naval Ammunition Depot near Colts Neck, New Jersey, and then a smaller flotilla trying to block an aircraft carrier at Norfolk, Virginia, in 1972 (Hartsough and Hollyday 2014:91-98; Cushing 2015b). The organizers referred to it as a People's Blockade, while the press called it a Peace Flotilla. Similar actions followed with other groups in Bangor, Washington, and San Francisco and Seal Beach, California (Hartsough and Hollyday 2014: 96-97). David Hartsough, one of the leaders, writes in his memoir that the success was largely due to the forged "comradship" that kept all the rowers and their supporters together, and to the fact "that courage is contagious" (Hartsough and Hollyday 2014:98), while also mentioning the same "David-and-Goliath" visual impression of such protests.

2. Bay Area Peace Navy, blockade of weapons to Central America and other causes (San Francisco, 1983-2015)

In the 1980s, a group in San Francisco, California, known as the Bay Area Peace Navy, founded by members of the Quaker social organization, the American Friends Service Committee, blockaded U.S. warships scheduled to ship munitions to the government of El Salvador in its war against rebels who had taken up arms against the government, with significant attacks mostly in the form of bombing against civilian peasant populations. The U.S. also provided military aid to the U.S.-backed counter-revolutionary guerrillas in Nicaragua, known as the *contras*, although at various

times that was prohibited by Congress. Members even sailed down the Rio San Juan in Nicaragua in 1985 to protest the *contra* war (Tributes 2015). Over the next fifteen years, the Peace Navy espoused a number of causes, many related to militarism and nuclear testing at sea, and formed a coalition with Greenpeace on some of their larger actions on behalf of environmental protection (Cushing 2015: 40).

While their initial technique had been direct action in the form of blockades – and they were not limited to kayaks and rowed boats, often joined by sailboats and larger craft – their protests also took the form of guerrilla theatre, satire, and water-borne visual protest, so that the protests themselves conveyed an anti-militarist message even when they weren't physically trying to stop business (Heifetz 1998). When I interviewed him in 1990, Bob Heifetz emphasized that humor and absurdity were an important technique in getting the message out beyond the "convinced." At one point they staged a mock invasion of Angel Island in San Francisco Bay to satirize the U.S. invasion of Grenada – and had to perform it a second time on command for an arriving television crew. The annual counter-demonstration during the naval Fleet Week became a prominent event. In one famous case, songs and banners used in a protest during Fleet Week in 1987 were blocked by the U.S. Navy, who created a security zone that prevented the demonstration from being seen, and the peace songs of a children's chorus from being heard from shore. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) brought the case, *Bay Area Peace Navy vs. United States of America*, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, successfully challenging that the Peace Navy's act of protest was constitutionally protected free speech and could not be legally blocked by the U.S. military (1990). The Peace Navy's position was a combination of direct action, but also a visual campaign against the issues of militarism, U.S. intervention, and, later on, the environmental damage caused by

exploitation of natural resources at sea and in the Arctic. The year after winning the case, they took on more absurd costumes and brought an “outrageous” boat to poke fun at ongoing U.S. militarism (Heifetz 1990). The Fleet Week protests, with explicit opposition to the ongoing history of American imperialism, continued at least until 2015 (Cushing 2007, 2008, 2015a).

Like the Philadelphia protestors, the San Francisco activists adopted the Quaker theme of “speaking truth to power,” but molding that idea into performed events that could be seen by the general public as the protest was taking place. (The actions in the Pacific to stop nuclear testing were less performative in this sense.) While the act of a nonviolent blockade remained a powerful action, even when unsuccessful in the moment – though on occasion part of a more successful movement in the long run – the transition into an emphasis on symbolic performance enabled the visual to have broader impact, something that would only become more enabled with the rise of social media.

3. 350 Pacific blockade of coal ships (Newcastle, Australia, 2014)

One of the most interesting manifestations has been the work of Pacific Island activists, who organized through a branch of 350.org, the organization founded by writer and activist Bill McKibben named for the goal of keeping the carbon dioxide concentration in the air under 350 parts per million. These activists created 350Pacific.org, using Facebook as a means to communicate and organize across the thousands of kilometers that separate their islands, as their islands are threatened with rising sea levels from climate change. Tuvalu, the Marshalls and Kiribati are the most immediately threatened populated islands, but Enewatak Atoll has radioactive waste deposits which would be dispersed if the atoll is flooded over, so the dangers surpass just those which affect island

residents.

In 2014, 350Pacific organized the Climate Change Warriors to converge on Newcastle, Australia and block a ship that was transporting Australian-mined coals from Newcastle. They arrived in their own native canoes and flotilla of boats designed each according to the traditional style of the island from which they came and made on their own home islands. As seagoing people, many of the islands had been settled by people who explored and migrated in hand-rowed boats, over vast distances. For this action, kayaktivists came from the aforementioned countries, as well as Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tokelau, and others, as well as Australia. The photos on their Facebook pages show the core group in handmade canoes and other boats, joined by dozens of supporters in commercially bought, usually plastic, kayaks. The Climate Warriors also took great pains to participate in traditional dress as well as with their national flags, which also added to the visual impact of the protests. In the months leading up to the action, and the years following, they have made use of clothing, banners, traditional crafts, in their photographic documentation of protests and actions on each of their islands. These have been uploaded through social media, particularly Facebook, and have formed the basis for building a movement.

More than simply visual or obstructionist, the protests also contained the message that energy based on extraction of natural resources – in this particular case coal – was the root of the problem, and that meeting the goals of climate agreements, indeed working towards keeping the Pacific habitable, depends upon the replacement of fossil fuels with renewable resources. And they signaled that traditional arts are a source of strength as well as knowledge and beauty. After all, they took the David-and-Goliath motif one step further, because not only were their boats significantly smaller, they were hand-carved and reflected the

specific culture associated with each island. This took the idea of uniform canoes and kayaks a step further by actually using works of art as instruments to save their own cultures from extinction.

4. *Blockade of Shell Oil driller (Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., 2015)*

The protest campaign receiving the most press coverage was the work of kayaktivists in the U.S. who attempted to stop Shell Oil from deploying a rig and supporting fleet to drill off the coast of Alaska in the Chukchi Sea, one of the most remote drilling sites in the world (Johnson 2015). The first part of the campaign took place in a series of protests from May 7-18, 2015 in Seattle, nicknamed “The Paddle in Seattle”⁶ partly in response to the Obama Administration’s granting permission to Shell to drill in the Arctic, and partly because the largest rig, the *Polar Pioneer*, had arrived in the Port of Seattle and was waiting to deploy along with some 25 other vessels (Garnick 2015), some of which would be departing from Portland.

Two months later, in Late July, activists dramatically suspended themselves from the St. Johns Bridge in Portland, Oregon for over 24 hours to block departure of the icebreaker *Fennica*, and blockaded the port with kayaks as well to prevent the Shell vessel from sailing to the Arctic to begin exploratory drilling for oil (Hauser 2015, Brait 2015). By jamming the waterways with their kayaks and blocking the ship from passing by suspending themselves from the bridge in midair, millions of people learned about Shell’s intentions who had not paid attention before. The *Fennica* departed anyway, but whether directly related or not, Shell abandoned their Arctic drilling plans in September, though this may have been as much a response to the low price of oil at the time as it was to public pressure and concern for the environment (Hayes 2015).

This multi-sited campaign in the U.S.

Northwest was part of a network of actions in seven cities, many built around kayaks, led by Greenpeace and the Backbone Campaign. The latter was co-founded by an activist whose name happens to also be Bill Moyer – no relation to the Bill Moyer who suggested a canoe blockade back in 1970⁷. The second Moyer is in the process of developing strategy and also providing training in nonviolent kayaktivism, which he outlines through his organization, the Backbone Campaign, which actually staged its first kayak protest in 2009, blockading a construction barge. Moyer, like his namesake, is involved not only in single actions, but in movement-building, and developing nonviolent water-borne protest as a tool in this campaign. He also informed me he is writing a book on kayaktivism, which would indicate this is a tactic that proponents expect will grow over the next few years. The earlier Bill Moyer saw this as but one tactic in a full and varied array of nonviolent actions, but there are two reasons why more kayaktivism could be more effective today. First, the availability of social media makes any visual that much more visible beyond the local news outlets. The earlier Moyer anticipated that, writing that symbolic action was important in social movements, as was breaking the monopoly of corporate media control (Moyer 1987). Second, in the 1970s and 1980s, the shipment and extraction of fossil fuels were not challenged as they are today, because the understandings and impact of climate change were not high-priority issues, even for environmentalists, as they are today.

5. *Sierra Club protests of power plant and natural gas pipeline (Delaware River, New Jersey, U.S., 2015-16)*

The East Coast of the U.S. has seen some kayaktivism in the past few years, although without the proximity to Alaska or the Pacific the environmental and military pressures do not have the same urgency that perhaps the issues do on the

6. Which itself was a reference to the 1999 “Battle of Seattle,” when anti-globalization activists protested the World Trade Organization’s Ministerial Conference in that city. That involved blockade of streets and prevention of delegates from attending the meeting, mostly non-violent although there were factions that engaged in vandalism and property damage.

7. Bill Moyer, personal communication, 2017. Because of the extreme unlikelihood of two people, both leading movements in kayaktivism, having identical names, I double-checked, contacting the “later” one through Facebook, and a close friend of the elder one who confirmed that the elder one, who grew up in the New England section of the U.S. and settled in San Francisco, did not have a family in the U.S. Northwest where the younger one was born. According to the younger Bill Moyer, the two actually met once, and someone who had worked with the elder one now also happens to serve on the board of the younger’s organization, called the Backbone Campaign (personal communication). To make matters even more confusing, both were not just activists, but also theorists of activism, and both published. Remember the first Bill Moyer died in 2002, while the second did not begin to be publicly active until 2003, reaching his strike in the 2010s. In this text, I will distinguish between the two as needed, but in the event of any possible confusion, I will refer to them as Bill Moyer (I) and Bill Moyer (II).

8. That said, there is no significant difference in participation rates between Atlantic and Pacific coastal states, New England states or Great Lakes states, although there is lower participation along the Gulf Coast and inland Plains and Mountain states (see Coleman Company and Outdoor Foundation 2015).

West Coast⁸. Nonetheless, there have been at least three mid-Atlantic groups involved in kayaktivism. The New Jersey Sierra Club has carried out several actions to protect the Delaware River, which separates New Jersey from Pennsylvania, from environmental damage caused by the overheated and polluted waste water from a Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) power plant (Comegno 2015) and from the installation of the PennEast pipeline to transport natural gas from fracking (Gibbs 2016), kayaking on both the Delaware River itself and the Delaware-Raritan Canal. All the protests include signage and other visual elements in addition to canoes and kayaks, which are without fail recorded by photographs and video in local media. In addition, at least two other local protests have received some news coverage in the Eastern states: kayaking on the Hudson River near Albany to protest a planned crude oil pipeline (Grondahl 2016) and on the Petuxent River near Solomons, Maryland against a liquefied natural gas plant in a residential neighborhood which poses environmental threats from the process itself, as well as from spilled polluted bilge water (Meador 2016).

*

More than most, kayaktivist protests are literally about power. By this I mean not just the power of corporations and the state to impose their will – dominant power in the sociological or anthropological sense. Nor do I refer only to contested power in the metaphorical sense of the Davids in the rowboats going up against the Goliath sea vessels and the cargo or weapons they hold, power in the sense of imbalance between the two, although that motif is repeatedly cited across time and space. Rather the protests have been about power in the sense that every protest discussed here has been more commonly about the power derived from the extraction of fossil fuels vs. sustainable power, as embodied symbolically by human muscle; and less commonly about the power of military might, the most terrible

form of which are nuclear devices, which also depend on the extraction of uranium for fuel. Where kayaktivists are united it is around the beliefs that humans have a responsibility to safeguard the environment and live harmoniously with it, and around the technique of using human muscle and hand-powered, sometimes hand-built craft. They believe that, in contrast, there are powerful parties who act as if exploiting the natural world is our birthright and can be undertaken no matter the cost. The activists believe furthermore that energy should be sustainable with minimal waste and disruption to the environment whenever possible; that militarism, especially in the service of an empire, runs counter to ideals of sustainable livelihood; and that technology needs to be harnessed not just to make a profit, but to serve human needs as well as those of the environment itself. In short, every one of these protests has involved a response to extraction, destruction, and pollution, or some combination thereof.

In her book on climate change, *This Changes Everything*, journalist Naomi Klein (2014: 169) develops the concept, borrowed from political science, of “extractivism,”

which she defines as a term originally used to describe economies based on removing ever more raw materials from the earth, usually for export to traditional colonial powers... Though developed under capitalism, governments across the ideological spectrum now embrace this resource-depleting model as a road to development, and it is this logic that climate change calls profoundly into question.

Extractivism is a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking. It is the opposite of stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and future life continues.

While each of the protests discussed above were organized independently, the

majority of them involved the attempted prevention of extraction without regard to the effects of the extraction itself, the combustion or processing of those materials, and the damage associated with their waste and disposal. The materials to be extracted primarily include oil and coal, but also natural gas and uranium, and the associated damage is to water, air, and the ecosystem. The antiwar actions confronted military firepower used against civilians, mostly in Central America and Bangladesh, but also the collateral damage to Pacific Islanders and others from the testing, and possible use, of nuclear weapons. Though not technically protests against extraction *per se*, they did make metaphorical use of water as a life-giving force as opposed to the destructive power of fire and metal, which of course is mined. Bay Area Peace Navy member Lincoln Cushing says, in fact “you *can* fight fire with water” (2015b: 52). And, rarely reported, military operations are among the greatest sources of carbon emissions worldwide (Bélanger and Arroyo 2017) and depend on fuels from petroleum to uranium, though extraction *per se* may not have been a motivating factor in those protests in the 1970s and 1980s.

That said, although kayaks and canoes traditionally have been made of organic materials, protestors of course would concede that metal canoes and plastic kayaks used today are also products of mining and drilling. Still, it is no accident that the first person to write about civil disobedience as such, Thoreau, while not indigenous himself, did show an affinity for the use of the handmade bark canoe with native guides in *The Maine Woods*, as observed by John McPhee in his study of the survival of the birch bark canoe (1975). At one point in the narrative Thoreau expresses, “I made a faithful study of canoe-building, and I thought that I should like to serve an apprenticeship at that trade for one season, going into the woods for bark with my ‘boss,’ making the canoe there, and returning in it at last” (1896: 165-6). This is not to say that

Thoreau’s canoe journeys as such have been direct inspirations for today’s protestors; he is not known for them as he is for civil disobedience. But neither is it an accident that civil disobedience is deeply connected not just to the maintenance of natural materials but to their exercise in defense of the earth and the idea of its stewardship. At the same time, to argue that this is due primarily to Thoreau’s writing would also be to overlook the deep cultural influence and integrity of native and indigenous peoples in resisting extraction and the destruction of their world for profit, from Maine and the Arctic to the South Pacific, for centuries really.

This can erroneously be seen as resisting the modern world, or all things modern, but only because we who are raised with the Western worldview (and increasingly the industrial powers of East Asia) have conflated the idea of the modern with the industrial, which depends on raw resources to function by turning natural materials into wealth, and then equating wealth with improvement. To McPhee, though, “for canoe-making nothing modern is an improvement” (1975: 53) and that’s an important pause lest we equate everything 1147⁹. There is a limit to that, and the question to be asked is at what point and in what ways the modern ceases to be by definition an improvement, or in what ways the modern never has seen an improvement in the standard of living for those, as Klein points out, from whom labor is extracted or who are pushed aside, as social burdens and impediments to the generation of wealth (2014: 169).

So for those like McPhee and Thoreau, but even more widely and profoundly for native peoples, the idea of actual “improvement” is not measurable by purely economic indicators (about which there is disagreement anyway) but must be defined in other terms. I would suggest there are two ways this idea can be recognized. The first has to do with decent survival: respect for human life, but also equally the lives

9. American schoolchildren – I can’t speak for the rest of the world – are indoctrinated with the belief that things are always getting better, owing to the fact that rights are always expanding, and we recognize past mistakes (e.g. slavery, genocide of Native Americans, hunting to extinction, etc.) and now we know better than we used to. I put this in a footnote only because it speaks to the experience of one country and its educational ideology (whether or not that is in fact carried out in policy, or faces reaction) though not necessarily to the educational systems in the wider world.

of animals and even certain plants, for whom we as the human species uniquely have to exercise care or they will be lost. This improvement, then, is moving toward existence (co-existence, mutual survival) on the extraction-stewardship axis. Klein says these ideals involve “those things that most of us cherish above all – a decent standard of living, a measure future security, and our relationships with one another” (2014: 88). Earlier, a 1970s Ford Foundation-funded study of energy needs identified “first priority to the fields of medicine, education, the arts, and sciences, and to basic human needs such as decent housing, adequate nutrition, livable cities, a clean, attractive, healthy environment,” as Edward Abbey reported (1977: 185). In this line of thinking, “mutual assured destruction” is no improvement in human life – quite the opposite, though national security has been the paradigm we have all been effectively living under since the 1950s.

The second axis of a better life is an aesthetic one. Whether bark-canoe builders, carvers and islanders from Tonga or Vanuatu, or kayaktivists in the U.S. Northwest, all refer to the beauty of the protest experience. The Pacific Warriors protest, in particular, garnered admiring responses on social media in relation to the boatcraft themselves. But aesthetics are rarely defined in only one dimension. Even celebrating the beauty of the craft refers to such elements as the visual design, movement, functionality, traditionality, implicit knowledge embodied in the fabrication, skill in handicraft, seaworthiness and durability. The accompanying protest signs can be physically attractive or clever, sometimes humorous. At the same time, the vision of dozens or hundreds of craft together can form a collective beauty which is more than simply functional. The younger Bill Moyer (2015) speaks of how

It’s powerful to be on the water, where the collection of colorful kayaks creates a mosaic, a giant, floating piece of art. There’s the experience of people paddling together; there’s the opportunity to participate in nighttime actions with luminary objects attached to paddles; there’s the music – ranging from hip hop to Coastal Salish drumming – echoing off the waves; there’s the ability to witness people looking out for each other.

This is an aesthetics that transcends the individual object, including the process and the interplay between multiple actors and their vessels, appreciating one person’s craft contribution as well as the manifest glow of the community on the water together and the implicit beauty of those working together in the background to prepare for the event. This then becomes an aesthetics of the collective, and of the folk, a shared experience of individuals and cultures, working in community.

But the question of what the modern world will become is a nagging one. The paradigm of capitalism is that growth is essential, and unending. To this day our ruling paradigm is still that the economic health of a people can be best measured by the central defining factor of growth in Gross Domestic Product. Thus the policy, and specifically energy, choices governments have made over the past several decades prioritize economic growth over environmental stability (Klein 2014: 84-87). Especially in China and India, this has led to an increase in carbon emissions in the 21st century, even after the scientific community recognized that a decrease is necessary for human survival (Klein 2014: 80). Growth and better conditions of living are not, in the long run, linked, nor are expansion and progress. Yet it is imperative to recognize as anthropologists that these are core, unquestioned (or seldom questioned) tenets in the society in which most of the world lives. The embodiment of these ideas are part of the human condition, but



they are cultural constructs, not empirical science. In fact the cultural worldview of cutting-edge climate scientists is now at odds with the worldview of governments, corporations, and most working people who need to put food on their tables and a roof over their heads – today, not twenty years from now. The nature of energy, including whether it is sustainable, clean, dependent upon mining or drilling, is the battleground of ideas and blueprints for the future. Hence the importance of kayaks and canoes, which have the power to block but which moreover depend on human power rather than extraction and combustion, fuel and exhaust.

Human society can, in fact, choose the economic system we want to live in, unlike the bodies and laws of nature we are born into. Though neatly dividing the two views into opposing camps – given that we all contain contradictions to some extent – this division between an economic worldview of sustainability, and an economic worldview of growth and progress, is a useful contrast in trying to understand how the battle to prevent catastrophic anthropogenic (which is to say, human-caused) climate change and mass extinction, including possibly that of our own species, will play out. These worldviews are culturally shaped, by us the folk as well as by corporate institutions of a much larger scale. Our cultural patterns of sustenance, production, consumption, and daily life are based on these belief systems though, in effect, circumscribed by a variety of factors and actors. The traditional indigenous view, expressed by Inuit elder Elijah Nowdlak in Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro's film on indigenous knowledge and climate change (2010), is that you take from nature only what you need to survive, not, by implication, what you need to get rich. American essayist and poet Wendell Berry has articulated, in contrast, the extent to which economic dominion over the natural world has come to dominate our mindset when he writes that, "We have assumed increasingly over the last five hundred

years that nature is merely a supply of 'raw materials,' and that we may safely possess those materials merely by taking them" (Berry 2002).

Moreover, we are in danger of being so lost in consumption that we are little more than economic actors. While Bill McKibben, not only the author of such seminal works as *The End of Nature* but also the founder of 350.org as an organization to prevent climate change, has written about the extent to which we have become, starting in the late 20th century, *homo economicus*, a being whose existence is defined by economic thought and practice, which separates us from other species that have come (and gone) before. While no one is purely an economic machine, the fact that the modern world conditions us to think that what makes the world modern is the fact that decisions – societal and individual – are primarily economic, as opposed to connected and life-sustaining. In an essay about Kerala, India, and the fact that it has roughly the same standard of living and life expectancy as Western industrialized countries, despite much lower *per capita* income and economic activity, McKibben (1995: 162-3) writes in defense of the cultural practices we engage in – practices reflective of our traditional folklife preferences – even when they are not economically either the most profitable or efficient:

Bake bread, say, or buy good bread from a baker we know, even though the same loaf would cost less at a supermarket. Knit, grow vegetables, play in a softball leagues, act in amateur plays or learn the violin... In fact most of us probably get our greatest satisfaction from such things. But the way we've set up our lives and the manner in which we worship convenience mean that we simultaneously practice all the environmentally and socially ruinous behavior of the modern, economic world. We ride our bikes for exercise¹⁰; but when we have any special place to go, we drive our cars. We look for bargains

10. In fact, around 9% of Americans canoe every year and 9% kayak, although the study does not suggest how much overlap there is (Coleman Company and Outdoor Foundation 2015).

on everything except that special loaf of bread, even if it means putting farmers out of business.

The issue of how to know we have improved human life and social relations then becomes much more complicated than just an economic calculation.

The “progress” fallacy becomes central at this point. The word “progressive” is a very tricky one, at least in the English-language context. It is a work that is almost impossible for Americans to define, particularly students. In the U.S. the term has come to represent the left-most end of the mainstream political spectrum over the past century or more, since what was called The Progressive Era, but how we actually define and measure “progress” remains unarticulated. The concept is part of their Americans’ anthropological cultural worldview in which they are so deeply steeped, they cannot step out of the own culture enough to define and analyze it. Overall, Western culture, particularly American culture, thrives on this idea of “progress,” of moving from one condition of being to another that is not only new, but better, and in a way that implies detachment from, or leaving behind, the past. Progress by definition implies moving further away from the state we were in before as opposed to regression or retrogression, so that in the case of technological progress, we are forever moving to a more sophisticated, and by implication, *complex* system of technology, from handmade, to industrial/mechanical, to post-industrial/electronic or digital. What is not implied or often understood is that this precludes the idea that progress can lead to more sophistication in the criteria of elegance, simplicity of design, efficiency, and particularly sustainability. Though we may be moving towards greater complexity in technology, we can also at the same time be moving towards more efficient and minimal use of natural resources, energy, and waste for expanded output. This becomes a key dichotomy.



Progress is getting *away from*, in our Western worldview, a discrete change, *not* in connecting to the continuity of generations. Progress has therefore become synonymous with consumer capitalism – extract it, build it better, buy it, use it, discard it, move on – with its emphasis on the new and therefore abandonment of the old. At the same time I believe in the communist model progress was also built upon an economic evolutionary model, getting away from economic systems and belief systems that were considered backward, reactionary, oppressive, unscientific – from feudalism to capitalism to socialism and then communism in the classic Marxist formation – in short, a “great leap forward” that implied making a break with past practice. Moving from the agrarian to the urban and centralized is also part of this, in both capitalist and socialist understandings of progress.

Also in the American context, since the 1900s, the meaning of the term “progressive” has become entrenched as a left-leaning social liberal, social reforms that stand for taking care of the poor and politically marginalized. This would be the very opposite of a “conservative” who wants to maintain the older social structures of 19th century and promote free-market capitalism coupled with a social conservatism that supports the old social orders, dominated by a religious worldview, and that circumscribes the liberated and equal powers of women, Blacks specifically, and gays and Lesbians. So when young people are asked to define “progressive,” they think of advances in technology and science, getting to a place with a lifestyle of greater ease and sophistication, faster transportation and communication, and broader social equality.

Implied in that without question in a capitalist-dominated world is economic growth and with that, the unquestioned assumption that life is getting better because as our technological knowledge expands, this gives us better tools to solve

social, health, and economic problems. The role that extraction plays, and especially the extraction of resources like oil that, once chemically altered through combustion, can never be returned or recycled to their previous state, is not questioned in the formulation of what is “progress.” Students and other Americans do not think of any social values that they are progressing *towards*, such as minimizing economic inequality, safeguarding the environment and protecting endangered species, giving equal opportunities to people of different genders, ethnicity, who were historically excluded, or any measurable criteria by which you can know how well you are progressing, such as life expectancy or literacy levels or availability of sanitation or eradication of diseases. And those are just human outcomes; that says nothing about a harmonious relationship with other, biologically diverse living beings, plants and animals and their well-being.

Progress, then, has become a motivation without a measurable goal. How do we know we’re progressing? It can be measured by distance (to the Moon, to the outer planets), or by production and accumulation of wealth, or perhaps eradication of disease. But it can also be measured by goals that are sustainable, that minimize disruption of natural cycles, that provide better quality of life for all of Earth’s beings. The spectre of catastrophic climate change has caused us to reassess which of those two paths towards progress we choose.

We cannot return to where we once were in terms of economies and scale. No one is calling for regressing, but rather moving forward to a society in which the challenges of a sustainable, satisfying life, when the world population is more than double what it was fifty years ago and less agrarian, more urban than ever in world history, have to be an anthropological and evolutionary problem of the most urgent order. But the understanding of time among agriculturalists, peasants, and pastoralists – including many indigenous

people who have resisted the spread of both capitalism and colonialism – is that life is cyclical based on the seasons and the return and regeneration of crops, usually products of the plant kingdom, and the animals that pollinate them. For thousands of years humans have labored under known or expected cycles with the faith that next growing season will be recognizably similar to this year’s and those in the past.

But two interlocked conditions have intervened and thrown the generally predictable cycles of agricultural life into uncertainty. The first is, as I have mentioned, the unquestioning necessity for capitalism to have growth in order to remain viable. The writer Edward Abbey (1977: 183), a critic of extraction long before that stance was popular, wrote

The assumption is that we must continue down the road of never-ending economic expansion, toward an ever-grosser gross national product... “Expand or expire” is the essence of this attitude, exemplified in the words of President Ford... “Man is not built to vegetate or stagnate – we like to progress – zero-growth environmental policies fly in the face of human nature.”

But a child can perceive that on our finite planet there must be, sooner or later, a limit to quantitative growth.

Thus capitalism itself is not cyclical, except perhaps on small farms. It depends on expansion and on processes that are neither cyclical nor reversible: mining from the ground, combustion to run engines, shaping raw materials into tools and artifacts that cannot be put back into the earth once they have been altered. The Industrial Revolution was built on that premise, and the promise of transformation of raw materials into sources of wealth. But, once underway, few people even dreamed of a way to turn that around, even to leave coal and oil in the ground where they are.

The subsistence cycle was broken, from a system that regenerated itself with every

crop cycle, usually annual, and turned into a system that mandated linear growth that was purposeful and unidirectional. That was a change, not in human biology, but in human civilization more than 150 years ago, disrupting forever cycles of rural traditional life that had been “human nature” for thousands of years. Humanity has never been the same since. We went from an ecology of cycles and repetition, based really on astronomical factors that influence the seasons, to a system of growth and expansion with no return to the original, a deep shift in human organization and the workings of agriculture, an 8.000-10.000 year-old system of living and subsistence, changing just in the last two centuries to an industrial, manufacturing system that is not restricted by or to the cycles of nature and the seasons. Not only did the rift between the two systems widen, but more and more of the people whose lives and livelihoods are based on natural cycles crossed over paradigmatically to the culture of those whose lives become validated only in the service of growth (see also Thompson 1967).

The other change that will not be reversible in our lifetimes is the climate change provoked by that industrialization and the burning of carbon-based fuels. We may be able to bring the rate of emissions down (although Naomi Klein cites the work of several scientists and economists who suggest that it would take a monumental shift in planning and lifestyle, and indeed the world economic system, to accomplish this). In the meantime, as of this publication, farmers have already observed shifting climatic conditions and the impact upon crops. Even turning around the rate of emissions will take time before the effects on climate are slowed. Just as cycles have become replaced by proponents of linear growth, so have climate cycles and weather patterns become disrupted by the changes in the earth’s atmosphere. Like the big ships confronted in Baltimore or Newcastle harbor, they cannot be turned around immediately.

What kayaktivism accomplishes metaphorically, then, is to create a break in the association of progress with extraction, technology, and profit. Using dual symbols of craft on water – the means of transport on literally the flowing and sustaining requirement for all life on earth – kayaktivism asks us to think of motion and regeneration as life forces, and of creation over profit. For this message to take root requires a re-examination of the concept of progress and to ask what role there is for tradition on progress to a better life.

Kayaktivism is one of a number of activities that asks us to reframe tradition as an activity opposing the dominant economic model not because it survives from the past or is residual, to use Raymond Williams’ term (1977). Nor does it function as an “invented tradition” per Hobsbawm’s formulation, solidifying group allegiance, deferring to and thus reinforcing the legitimate authority of the state, and imparting among all the values of the state by demanding loyalty to state and, in the post-World Trade Organization era, corporation (Hobsbawm 1992: 9). Instead it draws its power from rebuilding severed temporal discontinuities – the disuse of meaningful technologies, artisanship, and artistry, or practice that had meaning beyond the generation of wealth, and abandonment of hand-power in transport – and creating new connections across space and borders through shared activities, communications, and the not incidental free flow of water and ideas. Moving towards a world in which continuity is again valued, including the continuous cycle of regeneration, life and death in the natural world, is progressive, as we also recognize and denounce the discontinuity inherent in the meaningless practice of extracting, purchasing, consuming, and discarding¹¹. The former is progressive because it builds on accumulated knowledge leading to wisdom, while the latter is just replacement, a way of life that values the generation of wealth over (and at the expense of) a

11. In a 2011 newspaper interview, the folk musician, Martin Carthy, part of an English popular folk band known as “Steeleye Span” that starting in the late 1960s revived tunes and recorded them with more contemporary arrangements, defined tradition as being rooted and concerned with the continuity of life cycles. “I regard tradition as progressive,” he said. “A traditional song is a progressive force, because it is concerned with the continuity of things. ... You come from somewhere, ... I’m not interested in heritage – this stuff is alive, we must claim it, use it” (Vulliamy 2011).

more fulfilling existence for more living beings. After all to be fruitful – productive, creative – is a higher commandment than to accumulate wealth and consume. Oscar Wilde’s famous definition of a cynic (“one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing,” from *Lady Windermere’s Fan*) is fully realized in the extraction and exploitation of natural resources for energy. For generations our society led us to believe that to be modern is to understand and partake in economic activity and be a participant in the economic system, rather than understand the idea of *value*, which may in fact require the retreat from economic activity, as Thoreau demonstrated so well.

It is indeed this idea of economic growth that has been equated with progress, and still is the dominant marker of economic health of national and global economies. Without growth, we are in recession or depression, and the tax revenues needed to fund the common good dry up. It is that relationship between “progress” and “growth” that has been called into question by the sustainability and environmental movements. Given the dominance of the world capitalist system as the sole viable economic organizer since 1991, “growth” has thus become the *sine qua non* for measuring economic health and progress.

But the challenge from the environmental movement has been to look at the available resources on the planet, the ability to feed an expanding population, and the energy demands and use of non-renewable resources, in order to ask whether economic growth is environmentally sustainable and culturally desirable. To this movement, “progress” becomes a move towards a more sustainable future, in terms of economics, energy, and resources. It is wrong to say “back to” this lifestyle, because the nature of climate change and the urbanization of the world population, which is much larger than ever, are novel situations that have never existed before and thus call for new solutions in agriculture, diet, housing, and

of course energy. Ironically progress has to be a move towards a lifestyle closer to a more traditional, *cyclical* one, one more connected to the generations that came before and will follow. The dominant, urban culture has to move away from a time orientation that is linear, ending up at a different place from where we began when we hand things off to the next generation, toward the cyclical practice of time, handing off to the next generation in a way that they can continue the cycles of cultivation and sustenance that have safeguarded the people for generations. In short this is a way more similar to the lifestyles and worldviews of peasants and indigenous peoples, without the concept of “going back” to an imaginary lifestyle. The challenges of producing enough food alone will require significant problem-solving. I acknowledge, taking the long view, that this cyclical concept in the macro view of humankind is somewhat of an evolutionary heuristic, given that human agriculture originated only 8-10,000 years ago, and the cycle of human existence underwent another radical break around the time of the Fertile Crescent. That said, we must for our own survival abandon the manic need since the middle of the 19th century to burn and deplete fossil fuels such as coal and oil, non-renewable, single-use, non-cyclical, and involving non-reversible chemical reactions that leave a residue that effects all living beings. This is because the cycles of climate that have existed for hundreds of thousands of years, if not longer, have just within an astronomical moment become linear – or linear enough to provoke the sixth major extinction of life on Earth from which our species is unlikely to emerge.

Getting back to sustainable traditions, then, becomes the progressive option; or put another way, we have to move our linear conception of progress forward enough to engage it in a cyclical pattern of sustainability across generations to come. In this way, they were using elements that cannot truly be described as residual though they were traditional – traditional in the

progressive sense, I would argue, in that the intention is to connect the techniques of generations with those coming in the future. But this is at the same time, what Raymond Williams (1977) calls an emergent tradition. Its strength is in its imagination of new possibilities for culture and tradition and viewing tradition not as something static but as something, in fact, progressive. It is in this contradiction and conflict between the traditional, the imaginative (in the sense of imagining a more equitable and sustainable world), and the progressive, in turn returning to the cyclical and sustainable that a new expressive politics can emerge.

But unlike the technological optimism of the twentieth century, what those envisioning this new movement now realize is that it is going to take a kind of progression/return towards simpler – or perhaps a better term would be more elegant and aesthetic – technologies that is going to make this possible. It is not new machines that will make our lives more convenient, it is the new employment of reliable, energy-minimal technologies, including growing our own food, bicycling and walking (and paddling, when necessary, but hopefully not in floods), reducing our energy use and consumption and making sophisticated choices about which technology we have to use while lowering our so-called carbon footprint overall. McKibben (1995), for example, is a proponent of the Internet and mobile phone technologies, even conceding their energy demands, because the benefits of expanded and accessible communication

and the potential for organizing worldwide movements outweigh the energy spent by them. After all, these are not purely Luddite, anti-technological movements, rather movements to scale down the technology to the job at hand, and an attempt to take the means of production (and profit) away from disembodied, distant corporations and put them back into local hands – literally, hands, arms, legs, minds, all working, like paddlers, in tandem and with imagination.



Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was delivered as a keynote at the Congress of Young Folklorists in Viljandi, Estonia in October 2015. My great thanks to Professor Ülo Valk for the invitation to speak, and to Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, Pihla Siim, and Liilia Laaneman for making my stay there so great in so many ways. Thanks also to the U.S. Embassy in Estonia for providing travel funds that made my journey possible. A very preliminary version of some of these ideas was presented at a forum at the American Folklore Society meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in November 2014. Thanks to my co-chair Emily Socolov for her support in developing these ideas. Thanks also to Sultana Alam, Arif Yousuf, Alex Cox, Bill Moyer (II), and Margaret Carne for answering questions, and in memory of Bob Heifetz for our interview in 1990 which left an indelible impression.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbey, Edward. 1977. *The Journey Home*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.
- Bay Area Pace Navy v. United States*, 914 F.2d, 1224 (U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit 1990).
- Bélanger, Pierre and Alexander Arroyo. 2017. *Ecologies of Power*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Berry, Wendell. 2002. "The Idea of a Local Economy." In *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, edited by Norman Wirzba, 249-261. Berkeley: Counterpoint.
- Brait, Ellen. 2015. "Portland's Bridge-Hangers and Kayaktivists' Claim Win in Shell Protest." *The Guardian*, 31 July. [Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jul/31/portland-bridge-shell-protest-kayaktivists-fennica-reaction>].
- Coleman Company, The and The Outdoor Foundation. 2015. *2015 Special Report on Paddlesports*. Golden, CO and Washington, DC: Coleman Company and The Outdoor Foundation. [Available online at: http://c.y.mcdn.com/sites/www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/General-documents/OIF_PaddlesportsResearch_201.pdf].
- Comegno, Carol. 2015. "Kayakers Protesting Against PSE&G River Plant." *Courier-Post*, 12 October. [Available online at: <http://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/2015/10/12/kayakers-protest-pscg-river-plan-delaware-sierra/73713730/>].
- Cushing, Lincoln. 2007. "A Better Fleet Week is Possible.," accessed July 25, 2017. [Available online at: <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/PN/PN2007.html>].
- Cushing, Lincoln. 2008. "Roosevelt 1908, McCain 2008: San Francisco and the American Thirst for Empire.," accessed 25 July, 2017. [Available online at: <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/PN/BAPN2008.htm>].
- Cushing, Lincoln. 2015a. Bay Area Peace Navy – Fleet Week 2015. Letter Sent to *SF Chronicle* 10/10/2015.," accessed July 25, 2017. [Available online at: <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/PN/FleetWeek2015.html>].
- Cushing, Lincoln. 2015b. "Fighting Fire with Water: The Bay Area Peace Navy's Large-Scale Visual Activism." *Signal: A Journal of International Political Graphics & Culture*. 4: 38-53.
- Davenport, Coral. 2015. "U.S. Will Allow Drilling for Oil in Arctic Ocean." *The New York Times*, May 11.
- Democracy Now!. 2011. "Photos: Sailing Toward Gaza Aboard the Canadian Boat Tahrir with Freedom Waves Flotilla." *Democracy Now!*, 2 November. [Available online at: http://www.democracynow.org/2011/11/2/photos_sailing_toward_gaza_around_the_canadian_boat_tahrir_with_freedom_waves_flotilla].
- Garnick, Coral. 2015. "'Paddle in Seattle' Protesters Gather Against Shell Oil Rig on Saturday." *Seattle Times*, May 16. [Available online at: <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/paddle-in-seattle-protesters-gather-against-shell-oil-rig/>].
- Gibbs, Keleigh. 2016. "Protesters Kayak in Opposition of PennEast Pipeline." *WFMZ-TV News*, 19 June. [Available online at: <http://www.wfmz.com/news/western-new-jersey/protesters-kayak-in-opposition-of-penneast-pipeline/99979024>].
- Grondahl, Paul. 2016. "Kayakers Protest Pilgrim Pipeline on Hudson in Albany." *Albany Times-Union*, 12 September. [Available online at: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Kayakers-protest-Pilgrim-Pipeline-on-Hudson-in-9214721.php>].
- Hartsough, David and Joyce Hollyday. 2014. *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist*. Oakland: PM Press.
- Hauser, Christine. 2015. "Greenpeace Activists Dangle from Oregon Bridge for 2nd Day to Protest Arctic Drilling." *The New York Times*, 30 July.
- Hayes, Chris. "All in with Chris Hayes, Transcript 09/29/15." MSNBC, accessed 24 July, 2017. [Available online at: <http://www.msnbc.com/transcripts/all-in/2015-09-29>].
- Heifetz, Bob. 1990. Personal Interview with Author. San Francisco. 31 March.
- Heifetz, Bob. 1998. "I was there...": Bay Area Peace Navy." Found San Francisco (Wiki). Found San Francisco. [Available online at: http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Bay_Area_Peace_Navy].
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1992. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Kirk. 2015. "Raising Paddles in Seattle to Ward Off an Oil Giant." *The New York Times*, May 11.
- Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kunuk, Zacharias and Ian Mauro. 2010. *Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, edited by Igloodik Isuma Productions & Kunuk Cohn Productions Isuma TV.
- McKibben, Bill. 1995. *Hope, Human and Wild*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.
- McPhee, John. 1975. *The Survival of the Bark Canoe*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Meador, Anne. 2016. "'Paddle on the Patuxent' Links Dominion with Disaster." *DC Media Group*, 13 March. [Available online at: <http://www.dcmegiagroup.us/2016/03/13/paddle-patuxent-links-dominion-disaster/>].
- Moyer, Bill (I). 1987. "History is a Weapon: The Movement Action Plan: A Strategic Framework Describing the Eight Stages of Successful Social Movements." [Available online at: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/moyermap.html>].
- Moyer, Bill (II). 2015. "High-Water Mark." *Real Change News*, 15 November. [Available online at: <http://realchangenews.org/2015/11/18/high-water-mark>].

Myers, Nancy. n.d. "Slacktivism and Acedia." Science and Environmental Health Network. [Available online at: <http://sehn.org/slacktivism-and-acedia/>].

Paumgarten, Nick. 2013. "Kayaktivist." *The New Yorker*, 29 July.

Stripersonline.com. 2011. "Kayaks Not Considered a Vessel". [Available online at: <http://www.stripersonline.com/surftalk/topic/430958-kayaks-not-considered-a-vessel/>].

Taylor, Richard K. 1977. *Blockade: A Guide to Non-Violent Intervention*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Thompson, E. P. 1967. "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." *Past & Present*. 38: 56-97.

Thoreau, Henry David. 1896 [1864]. *The Maine Woods*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

Townsend, Chris. 2017. *On Kayaktivism, and Other Recent "-Tivisms."* Oxford University Press. [Available online at: <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2017/06/kayaktivism/>].

Tributes.com. "Obituary for Mr. Thomas Hendrick Caulfield." Tributes.com, accessed 25 July, 2017. [Available online at: <http://www.tributes.com/obituary/read/Thomas-Hendrick-Caulfield-103552135>].

Vulliamy, Ed. 2011. "Martin Carthy: 'I'm Not Interested in Heritage: This Stuff is Alive'." *The Guardian*. 16 April. [Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/apr/17/martin-carthy-interview-ed-vulliamy>].

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yousuf, Arif. 2016. *Blockade*. DW Productions.

